Masters in Art

A Series of Illustrated Monographs

Issued Monthly

HUNT

PART 104——VOLUME 9

Bates and Guild Company
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MASTERS IN ART

A SERIES OF ILLUSTRATED MONOGRAPHS: ISSUED MONTHLY

PART 104 AUGUST VOLUME 9

Hunt

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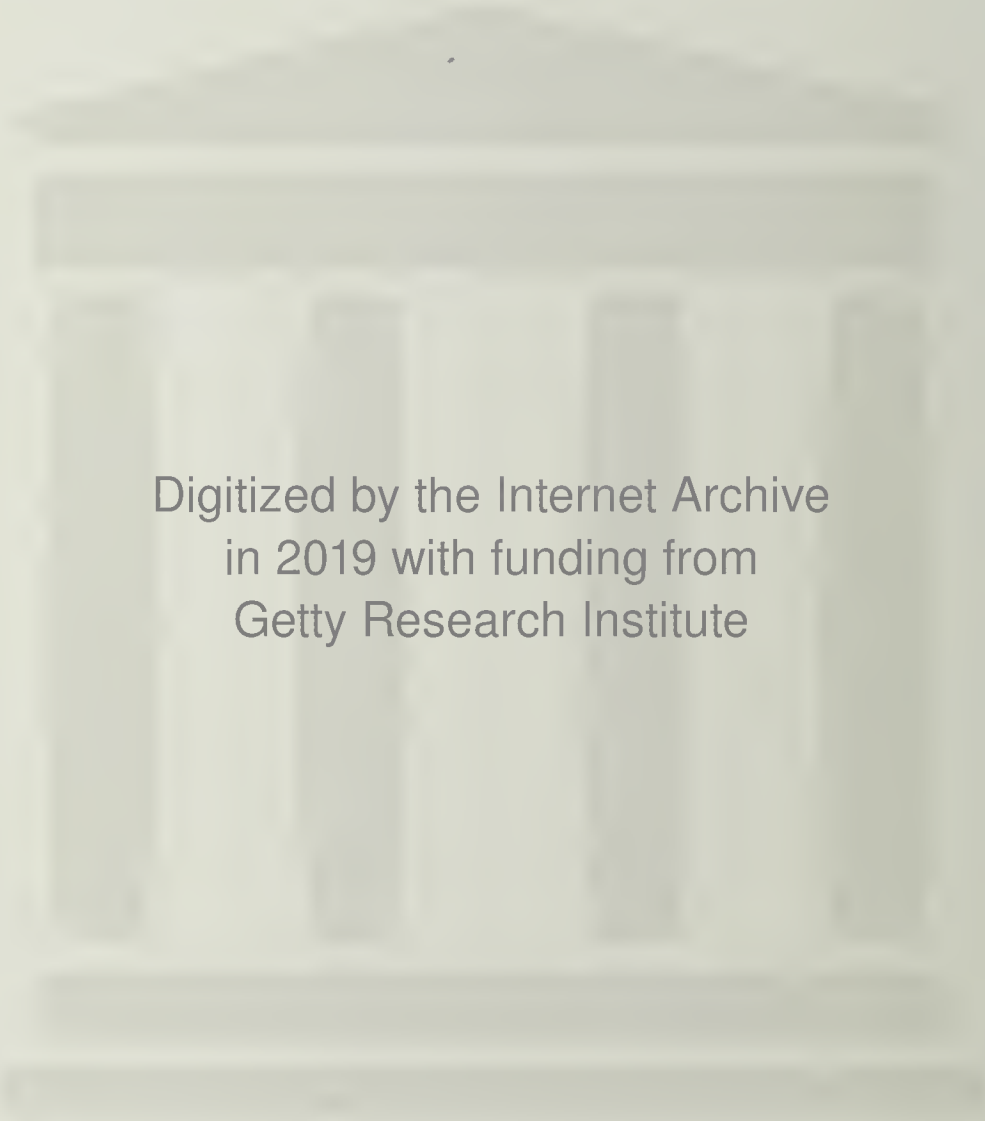
MASTERS IN ART

Hunt

AMERICAN SCHOOL

HUNT
PORTRAIT OF MASTER GARDNER
LATIN SCHOOL, BOSTON



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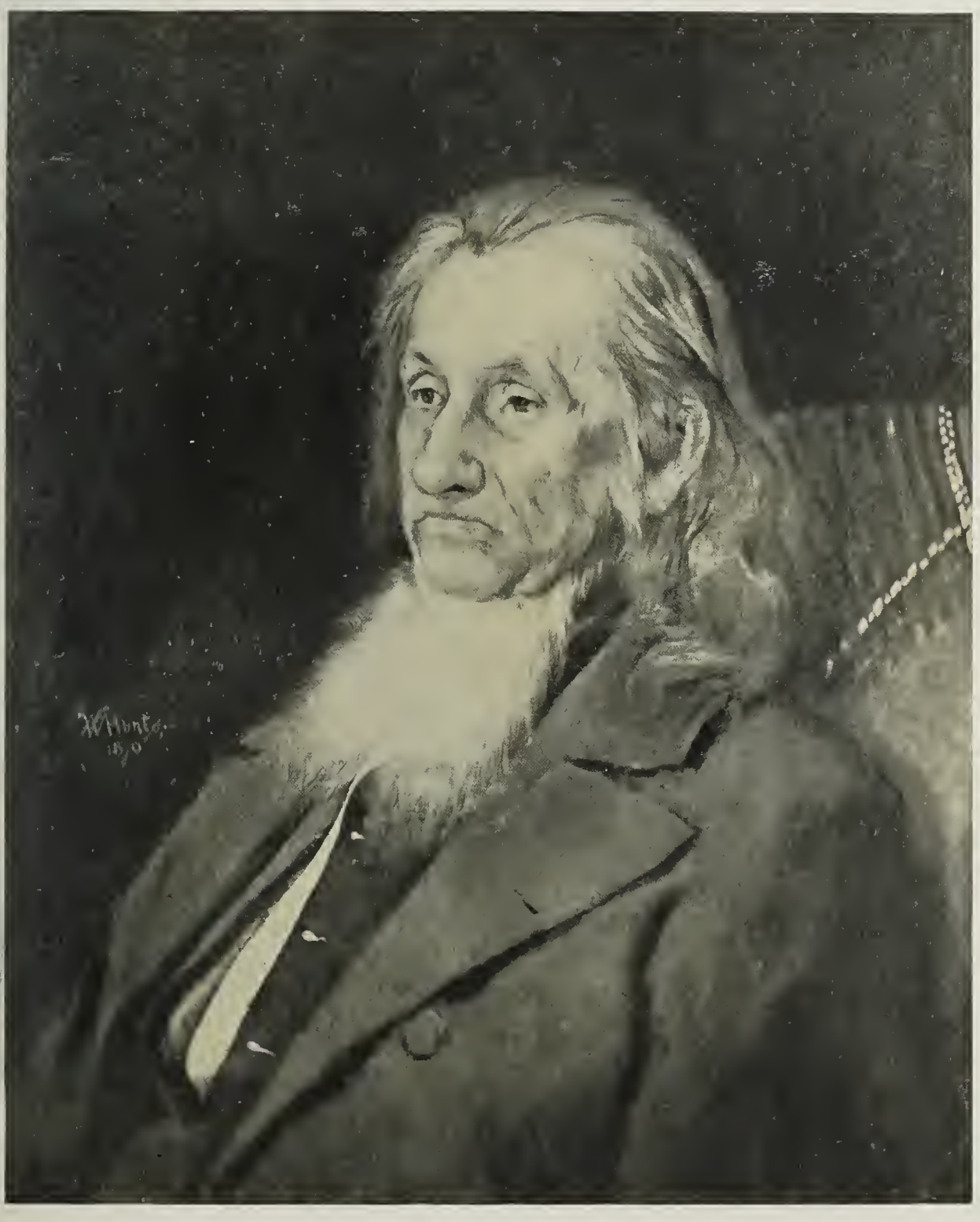
HUNT
PORTRAIT OF MRS. C. F. ADAMS
PROPERTY OF HON. CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS



HUNT
PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN
PRIVATE PROPERTY

HUNT
DISCOVERER [STUDY]

HUNT
FLIGHT OF NIGHT

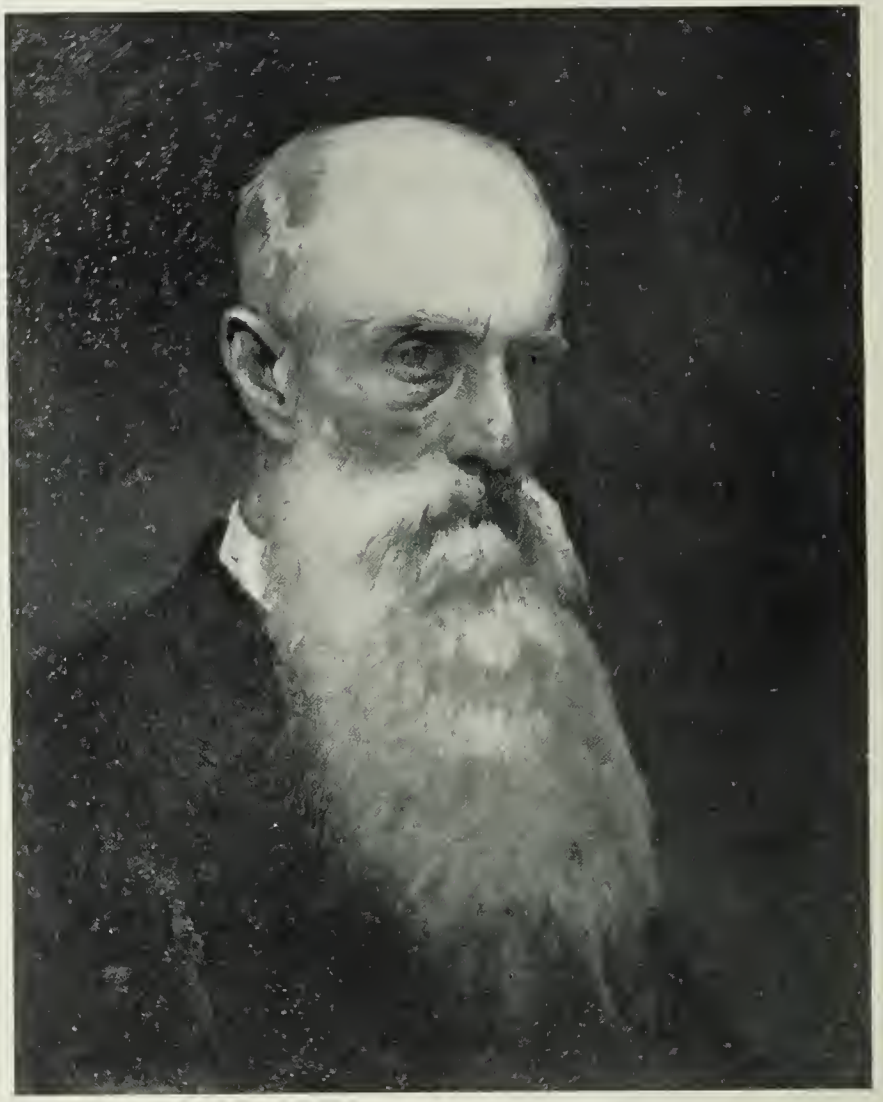
HUNT
PORTRAIT OF JUDGE SHAW
COURT-HOUSE, SALEM, MASS.

HUNT
PORTRAIT OF MISS T.

HUNT
GIRL WITH WHITE CAP

HUNT
THE BATHERS
OWNED BY MRS. CHARLES FAIRCHILD, NEW YORK CITY

HUNT
GIRL READING



PORTRAIT OF HUNT BY HIMSELF

This portrait has a rather grim, severe look, which was not wholly Hunt's character, as he was full of gaiety and gentleness and the milk of human kindness. But a man painting himself forgets these things. He is interested in the problem in hand, and paints spot for spot and line for line without thinking much about the expression. Probably, too, Hunt, whose life had not been entirely happy, looked rather sad when his face was in repose. His life, though successful, in the main, was full of constant disappointments. Hunt, as has been said before, looked like certain portraits of Da Vinci and Titian. He was also likened in his early life to Géricault, the famous painter of the "Raft of the Medusa."

William Morris Hunt

BORN 1824: DIED 1879
AMERICAN SCHOOL

WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT was born in Brattleboro, Vermont, March 31, 1824. His father, Judge Jonathan Hunt, was a prominent jurist of the State and his mother was a woman of remarkable ability and force of character. She had always wanted to be an artist herself, and when her children were old enough she made every effort to have them taught something of drawing and painting.

William Hunt was a boy of remarkable cleverness and ability. Even at an early age he was distinguished for his skill in drawing and, indeed, in all delicate manual processes. His mother organized a class in drawing for herself and her family which was taught by an Italian refugee named Gambadella, so that from a very early time Hunt had a considerable knowledge of drawing.

He went to Harvard College for a time, and later learned, from a Boston expert, to cut cameos. Determining to devote himself to the study of art, he went to Europe in 1845 and began to work in Düsseldorf. Though he had most agreeable friends there, he did not like the methods of teaching then in vogue at that place, and determined to go to Paris. There he chanced to see a picture by Thomas Couture, the then famous painter of 'La Decadence Romaine.' This picture was called 'The Falconer,' and made such an impression on the young artist that he at once decided to enter Couture's atelier. Being naturally quick and skilful with his hands, he very soon became the cleverest painter of the class.

Couture, an artist of immense skill and ability, had a carefully thought out method of painting which was quite famous in its day. The student drew his study in very carefully with charcoal. This being fixed, he made a very thin "rub-in" with turpentine. Or let us quote Miss Helen M. Knowlton's description: "The method of painting in Couture's class was to make a careful and if possible a stylish or elegant drawing of the subject, adding only a few simple 'values' or shades, with a 'frottée' of thin color, leaving them to dry over night. Next day, by a formula which can be found in Couture's little book, 'Method of Painting,' another thin 'frottée' was used in portions; and with long-haired whipping-brushes the color was laid on in its exact

place — the darks where they belonged and of the right depth of tone, the lights thickly and of startling brilliancy. Not one stroke could be retouched or mud would ensue. The middle tones required the utmost nerve, feeling, and decision; but their quality when good was delightful."

It is evident from this description that such a method would be too mannered for absolute truth. Hunt, however, naturally skilful, soon mastered it and produced very brilliant work. Nevertheless, he was not entirely satisfied with it, and, chancing to come across some of the work of Jean François Millet, he was greatly struck by its power and sincerity. He came to know Millet, bought many of his pictures at a time when the great artist sorely needed help and encouragement, and always remained his friend.

Couture was not at all pleased at this entanglement with a painter "who," as he said, "was too poor to give his peasants wrinkles to their breeches." The relations between master and pupil became somewhat strained, and Hunt came more and more under the influence of Millet. It is difficult to imagine men of more different temperament: Millet, serious, a little heavy, a little sad; Hunt, light, gay, and full of the joy of living. No doubt on this account he became a great friend of Millet. The two men used to take long tramps in the country, and Millet would explain his manner of seeing and doing. Hunt, whether consciously or unconsciously, did various subjects something in the genre of Millet, but the work of the two men was really quite different. Hunt's, despite the peasant subject, were always graceful, delicate little Watteaux in sabots. Something of Couture's technique persisted in his work, making it different from the solid *maconné* manner of Millet.

The friendship of Hunt and Millet is indeed a curious thing, it was so unproductive of results. Men who never met Millet at all, like Segantini, show his influence much more than does Hunt, who knew him well for a long time. The fact is, the natures of the two men were entirely different. Hunt was too keen, too sympathetic, an observer not to see and feel the great qualities in Millet's art, but they were not his qualities; for, in short, his qualities supplemented those of Millet. He had just the grace and lightness of touch which Millet had not and which would have been out of place in Millet's somber work.

In 1856 Hunt returned to America and settled at first in Newport. Here he influenced, among others, the work of John Lafarge, then a very young man; and in the best later work of Lafarge one sees much of this Hunt influence. Later Hunt came to Boston and at first, strange to say, took a studio in Roxbury. Later he engaged an atelier in the Commercial Building in Boston and began his long Boston career.

One of his first important pictures was the portrait of 'Chief Justice Shaw,' which will always remain one of his finest works. Somewhat later he began his first picture of 'Anahita,' or 'The Flight of Night' (Plate v), which he afterwards painted again as a decoration on the walls of the Capitol at Albany. The original picture was an enormous affair some fifty feet long, and was unfortunately burnt in the great Boston fire, which destroyed almost all of Hunt's work made up to that time, besides pictures by Millet, Diaz, and other Barbi-

zon painters. This was a great misfortune, because, while in certain respects Hunt's work constantly improved till it came to be a prevision of modern impressionistic work, there is none the less a closeness, or solidity, in his earlier work — as so often happens in the work of a young artist of talent — that is superior to the more loosely made "facture" of his later years.

Toward the end of his life Hunt received a commission to decorate two great panels in the State Capitol at Albany. These decorations were the supreme effort of his life. They were painted with astonishing rapidity under the most difficult circumstances, and they were far the most important, the most ambitious and, as decorations, the best things that had been done in America up to that time. Indeed, as one reviews the acres of decorative work done here since then, one is compelled to say that his decorations, despite certain faults, are among the very few fine decorative efforts that have been produced in America. It may have been due to the enormous exertions necessary for finishing this decoration "on time" for the passage of the American Juggernaut; whatever the reason, Hunt's health shortly after gave way, he suffered greatly from nervous depression, and some six months after, while staying with friends in the Isles of Shoals, he was found drowned in a small pool.

Having been on the whole under-estimated during his life, it is possible that his work was by certain over-enthusiastic friends over-estimated immediately after his death. Certain of his pictures sold for what were then enormous prices, and in Boston, particularly, he was regarded as one of the greatest of painters. Now it is possible that the wheel has turned too much the other way. One seldom hears of Hunt; one seldom sees his pictures. This is partly due to the fact that the portraits, which made much the greater part of his work, are largely owned in private families. Such neglect is unfortunate, for it still remains true that Hunt is among the very few remarkable American painters, and as an artistic personality he still remains quite unique. It is this same artistic personality and temperament that did and does endear him to many artists. He was artist to his finger-tips, and such defects as he had were just as much the result of his artistry as were his merits. In a country rather lacking, for the most part, in artistic temperament, he was a supreme example of just that quality. And in artists' studios one still hears fine stories of his generosity, his gaiety, and his artistry.

In summing up an artist's qualities one wants to find just that trait which made him most himself and at the same time most different from others. In Hunt it would seem that this primal quality was grace. He had a delightful way of indicating things, no matter how slightly, and in his finished work, even if it were not in every respect wholly desirable, this quality of delicate grace is most often to be found. And most of all, perhaps, is this found in certain portraits of ladies, which have a peculiar air of distinction. Naturally, in virile portraits like that of Chief Justice Shaw this trait is not so obvious. But the sensitiveness that produced it is there. Besides, the 'Shaw' was a single great effort, and, though fine, was not perhaps so characteristic of the artist's nature as are several of the portraits of women.

His situation in America was in some respects a difficult one, and perhaps explains some of the qualities and the defects in his work. He had been very successful in France, showing a singular precocity. He returned to find America, or at least Boston, indifferent to many of the things he cared about. He had a distinct genius for society, and by his mere personal charm succeeded in interesting many people in the work of his friend Millet. And from this same reason many people became interested in his own work, people who perhaps would not have cared much about the work alone. It came about in the end that he had a band of most devoted admirers, while many others were, to say the least, indifferent.

This is the fate of almost all artists; but Hunt was not of a nature to bear it with the stoic equanimity which many artists, despite their temperament, learn to assume. It irritated him at times, this indifference, and to some extent it reacted on his work. So did the thick and thin praise of his devoted friends. And more than all this was the consciousness — for he must have been conscious of it — that he was far and away the best painter of his time in America. He had no able rivals, as had Titian or as Reynolds had, to push him to do his level best. If he produced a study head in two or three hours, full of charm and possibly lacking in study and in construction, he might very well have said to himself, "Well, there are slighted bits in it, but it's a lot better than any one else in America can do."

This was true enough, but it did not incite him to the earnest, thoughtful study which is most often shown in the works of the great masters. He was capable of the closest concentration in his work; as is shown, for instance, in the portrait of Mrs. Adams. Yet some of his work is not as good as he was capable of doing. He had immense facility. There are astonishing stories of his finishing a portrait in two or three sittings; and the result being so much better than anything that any one else about him was doing, it might easily have happened that he was tempted to let that go as pretty good which might have been made very good. "*Le meilleur est l'enemie du bon.*" And perhaps this tendency was a little helped by a chorus of most amiable friends, who were always ready to applaud the slightest sketch.

One is tempted to compare Hunt with two other famous American portrait-painters, to whom numbers of this series have been devoted; that is, to Copley and Stuart. The work of Copley was perhaps of these three the most studied and careful. On the other hand, it lacked the vitality of Stuart and the almost morbid charm of Hunt's best work. Copley, toward the end of his life, came to work with great facility, but his work never had the delicate grace which distinguishes that of Hunt. Stuart, on the other hand, as a painter of single heads, was, perhaps, better than either of these; but one is not disposed to judge an artist simply from his ability to paint single heads. One wants to see what he would do with more ambitious work.

In summing up, one might say that Hunt, while possibly not so remarkable a portraitist as the other two men, was much better equipped for all kinds of art, and immeasurably a more artistic personality. Stuart seems to have been content to go on turning out luscious portrait heads to the end of the chapter. Copley was more ambitious; but his large subject-pieces, like

the 'Major Pierson' and the 'Surrender at Camperdown,' though interesting, were hardly remarkable works of art. On the other hand, Hunt ranged over the whole field of art, and everything that he did, even if slight and incomplete, was at least extremely artistic. The other two men were each in their way admirable workmen. Hunt, though full of natural dispositions, was hardly workman enough, but artist to his finger-tips.

No account of Hunt would be quite complete without some reference to the famous "Hunt Class." He had the feeling that many fine artists have had before him,— that there was too much pedantry in the schools and that he could produce better results in a more human and suggestive way. What he did succeed in doing was stimulating a number of intelligent women to remarkable work; work in some instances full of charm and suggestiveness, but almost always lacking in the fundamental qualities. Hunt taught as to angels. These ladies, though full of the most estimable qualities, were at least human. Their work had, as we have said, charm and suggestiveness; it was sometimes quite beautiful in color; but for the most part it was lacking in good construction, in sensitive feeling for line, in carefully observed values, especially in color-values. In six months he had taught some of these students to produce astonishing results. In six years they could do but little better. In short, the final result of his experiment was to establish the necessity of the old drill, that steady grinding drill in fundamentals, which chafes so many an artistic spirit. Most of his scholars ultimately realized this; but when the time came for study in other schools, the power of assimilation was gone; they knew too much and they did not know enough. The class remains — like other pathetic and splendid Boston experiments, like the Brooke Farm episode and others — a proof that the pennies must be counted before the pounds, and that art, though divine, is rooted in material things.

In studying Hunt's various qualities, it may be said that his drawing was good, at least as regards the construction of heads, though hardly particularly incisive or poignant. When he came to draw the nude figure, as in the 'Anahita' or 'The Bathers' (Plate IX), though his results were full of charm, they did not reveal remarkable power of construction or of sensitive line. In short, he was not primarily a draftsman, though he was capable of drawing quite sufficiently well when keyed up to it. As to his color, it varied greatly in quality. Sometimes it was extremely saturated and puissant, as in the 'Mr Gardiner' and in the 'Niagara.' Again it was somber and rather blackish, as in the 'Hamlet.' Yet again, as in 'The Bathers' his work had a rich glow that was very agreeable, though hardly suggestive of nature.

Hunt's work was full of character. He not only, when he was interested, grasped and expressed the character of his sitter, but there were besides, in his very work and the doing of it, certain characteristic accents quite different from the work of other men. He was himself a very distinct personality, and he had the gift to make his work look just as personal. His composition was not, perhaps, very remarkable; that is, one does not recall many arrangements of startling originality and power — except, perhaps 'The Bathers.' On the other hand, he knew the work that had been done in the world thoroughly well and his composition is always adequate and unobtrusive.

Strange to say, his values were not always very good. One says "strange" because this quality of values — that is, carefully observed relations of tone — was one on which he constantly insisted in his class and a thing which he thought a good deal about. At times, as, for instance, in a little charcoal drawing of an azalea blossom, his values are quite wonderful, suggesting color. At other times one feels they are not wholly just. The influence of Couture's technique persisted throughout his life in his work. It is true that he felt he had outgrown Couture. So, indeed, he had, but one does n't easily forget the lessons of one's first master. Couture, as a matter of fact, was the first teacher whom Hunt had taken seriously.

Just how true his work was is a difficult matter to decide. His earlier work impresses us as that of a man who had seen most of the fine pictures of the world and who had a very definite idea of how he thought a picture ought to look. No doubt the influence of Couture, and later of Millet, strengthened in him this sense of how a fine picture should appear. His earlier work, then, follows this formula pretty closely. Even the finer things, like the 'Chief Justice Shaw' (Plate VI), were built up from this same formula. Later, especially in the last few years of his life, he seems to have grasped the real aspect of nature more firmly, and his latest work, especially the portrait of Mr. Gardiner and some of the Niagara studies, are of a striking truth and originality. In the effort to compass this, as happens often enough with innovation, some of his lesser graces may have fallen away.

It should be remembered that while other men in America were merely marking time, Hunt was working out for himself something that very nearly resembled Impressionist art. His latest pictures, the Niagara studies and the portrait of Mr. Gardiner, are done in very pure color and produce very much the effect of certain pictures by the French Impressionists, though they are more plausible looking. Hunt, it is true, knew something about these French Impressionists. He was back in Paris for a time in 1869, and it is said that he knew Manet. Manet's work, however, after all only marked the beginnings of Impressionism; and Hunt, in certain respects, went farther than he.

Hunt also knew the work of Whistler at a time when he was practically ignored in America. He mentions one of Whistler's works, possibly 'The Blue Wave,' in his "Talks on Art." But while he sympathized with Whistler in his struggle against Ruskin, it does n't appear that he was influenced by his work. Indeed, as Whistler was a much younger man, this could hardly be expected. He says himself on the subject of his English acquaintances: "I knew many of the pre-Raphaelite painters in England, and liked them very much. They made a charming society of their own, friendly with each other and hospitable to strangers. They are wonderfully earnest workers, so one cannot fail to deeply respect them. Their pictures are not interesting — Rossetti's, for instance, which yet had something fascinating in the expression of the heads."

Toward the end of his life Hunt came to look very like Leonardo da Vinci. This, no doubt, was partly owing to his long white beard. But he had in some measure many of Da Vinci's qualities. He had his personal beauty and some-

thing of his physical strength, and his skill at turning his hand to anything. And with this went a something, one would not say dilatory, but a something which made him constantly experiment, constantly change. It was one of the defects of his qualities. It probably prevented him from producing as important work as he might have, and yet it gave his work an interest to those who care to study it which it might not have had under other conditions. And there is also this pathetic likeness to Da Vinci — that both men, in experimental mood, painted their masterpieces in oil-paints on a stone wall, and as a result, both pictures are now irretrievably ruined.

What has made Hunt's memory known to students more than anything else is the little book called 'Talks on Art.' Hunt was in the habit of giving brilliant, dashing criticisms, full of pith and humor, and one of the members of his class used to write down whatever he said, on the back of a canvas or anything that came handy. These notes were afterwards collected and published, and they make a unique book. The book is particularly valuable as being a record of what an artist of ability thought about questions of art. It is a most stimulating book, and many an art student has felt more like working after reading it. If it has a defect, it is that it encourages the American in his chief defect,— a tendency to do things carelessly and to hope that some Oversoul will perfect what he has not taken the trouble to start properly.

The book is full of witty sayings, as, for instance, this remark:

"I had as lief smell of music or eat the receipt of a plum pudding as listen to a lecture on art."

It is a remarkable exposition of an artist's way of looking at things, and even where it is inconsistent, perhaps because of that, it expresses the artistic point of view very well. All through it one finds suggestive phrases:

"In order to be ideal you have got to be awfully real."

"Don't mind what your friends say. In the first place, they think you 're an idiot; in the next place, they expect great things of you; in the third place, they would n't know if you did a good thing."

"Judges of art in America! What does their opinion amount to? 'Essipoff does n't touch me.' No, but spruce gum might."

"A great deal has got to be done materially in order to render things æsthetically."

"Do it! Don't be afraid. The moment you are afraid you might as well be in Hanover Street shopping."

"I remember your sketch of a turtle crossing a garden path — the most original thing that ever came out of Cambridge."

"We don't work enough for the sake of learning, but too much for the sake of having it known that we work."

"The struggle of one color with another produces color."

"I don't like *persuaded* sitters. I never could paint a cat if the cat had any scruples, religious, superstitious, or otherwise, about sitting."

"Duty never painted a picture or wrote a poem or built a fire."

"You can't even see a hair on a cat without losing sight of pussy."

"We can find all the disagreeable things in the world between our own hat and boots."

"Finish should be done in the same mood as the beginning."

"'How shall I finish my owl?' 'You've got his eye. Now you'd better put his body around it.'"

"If book-learning is called intellect, who wrote the first great books?"

"A man can be cultivated only up to his capacity."

"If speech is silver and silence golden, then gabble is greenbacks."

"I am trying for sentiment. 'Sentiment if you like, but do embroider it upon a possibility.'"

"Elaboration is not beauty, and sandpaper has never finished a piece of bad work."

"Let us remember that art, like jelly, has always been more easily recognized when cold."

"Be carefully careless."

"Whatever beauty there is comes not by itself but by what is around it."

"You can't finish anything until it is begun. Try to finish at first and you are digging a well up in the air."

"The most expressive phrases of this year's coinage: Chromo Civilization and Greedy Barbarism."

"In spite of his 'bad eyes,' Turner produced better pictures than all Germany."

There is this defect in the 'Talks,' that it is strong meat for babes. Nothing could be better for a young man fresh from five years in the Paris schools, but, spoken as it was for forty different people, it is naturally enough contradictory, so that the beginner is confused. And, worse than that, if he can *trouve son bien* therein, he can also find the particular sort of poison worst for him.

Hunt was a beautiful illustration of what the American nature can come to when it is filled with sweetness and light. He had, what most Americans lack, temperament,— a richness of blood, a passion of spirit, which seems frozen out of many of us by the modern cold-storage conditions under which we live. He was thoroughly American. His sayings are racy of the soil. But all that acridity, sourness, crudeness, which herald themselves in our national voice seemed burnt out of him by the fire of his passion for Art and Life.

The Art of Hunt

SAMUEL ISHAM 'HISTORY OF AMERICAN PAINTING'

IT is not easy to give a satisfactory appreciation of the work and influence of Hunt. He belongs to the class of which Allston was the type and precursor,— ardent young Americans, intelligent, enthusiastic, feeling the charm of the accumulated art of the Old World with a freshness and an intensity to which the native mind, dulled by constant familiarity, rarely attains. Nor was it all vague emotion. The men produced work full of promise, but the promise was never quite fulfilled. When they returned to America there was something

in their surroundings or in themselves that checked their development. In the case of Hunt it was not lack of sympathy. If the great masses were wholly indifferent and the majority of the artists really hostile, yet the people with whom he came in contact were all friends and admirers, comprehending and encouraging him. Few artists have had surroundings more sympathetic. What he lacked was professional criticism of a few intimate friends — or enemies — who were of the craft, knowing of what the art was capable, understanding his aims, and interested in their complete achievement rather than taking the intention for the accomplishment. Such criticism was peculiarly necessary to Hunt, for he was not completely master of his craft. He was right to reject the drudgery of Düsseldorf, which would certainly have limited his development; but, though later he worked hard under Couture, who was an excellent draftsman, his drawing lacks some of the prosaic but necessary Düsseldorfian qualities. He was just emerging from the student stage when he broke away to follow Millet, and a dozen years of the severest self-training should have followed. Something of the kind there was, but not enough, and he remains to the end an amateur — not only in the sense of loving his art, but also in lacking the sure professional mastery.

His first exhibited work, a portrait of his mother done in 1850, is purely a work of Couture's atelier, and the same may be said for 'The Prodigal Son,' though there the handling had become looser and freer, so that it was not very well received. His other early figure-pieces mostly show the same influence, though yielding to that of Millet in his 'Sheep-Shearing' and some smaller canvases. It was after his return to America, when he had forgotten or assimilated the example of his French masters, that his most personal and original work was produced,— figure-pieces like 'The Boy and the Butterfly,' his many portraits, his landscapes and still-life studies, culminating with his decoration of the Albany Capitol.

The work is most varied and most unequal, but it leaves an unsatisfied feeling in the mind. It was so promising, so promising to the end; but somehow it never culminated into masterpieces round and complete, where the painter could be said to have given the full measure of his temperament. The Albany decorations approach nearest such a standard; but, done under unfavorable circumstances and in almost impossible time-limits, they were still tentative and incomplete. It might have been otherwise if the scheme for the complete decoration of the Capitol had been given to him, as proposed, and his life had been spared to complete it.

This regret for what might have been should not belittle Hunt's actual achievement. His was a strong, artistic temperament, personal, and not to be turned into a mere echo of Couture or any other master. He had not only the emotional delight in beauty common to so many young Americans in Europe, but his emotional perception was artistic. He saw form simply, nobly, and in those great masses that give character, and he was besides a colorist. There is a certain ability to give a warm, rich tone to a picture which the competent student gets in a good school. In this sense May has just been called a good colorist; but Hunt was something different and beyond. He was

a colorist as Inness was, and felt naturally the delicate harmonies and contrasts of nature; he remembered them and recorded them in all their strength or subtlety. Coloring was not a kind of varnish to be spread over the picture; it was the picture. Canvases like 'The Bathers' or 'The Boy and the Butterfly,' his landscapes or still-life studies, are simply records of his delight in beautiful tones. Even some of the earlier figure-sketches are relieved from commonplaceness by the luminousness of a neck or a bit of dress against the sky. This feeling for color united with that for large, simple form made Hunt impatient of minute handling and forced him into a freer technique than had been previously used in America; and it is through this large handling and the feeling for texture involved with it that he exerted his greatest influence.

We have to recall the opposition and abuse which so conventional a thing as his 'Prodigal Son' aroused when exhibited at the Academy of Design and at New Haven to understand how universal was the laborious, inartistic technique evolved from Düsseldorf and an untrained native taste. In landscape, Inness and Homer D. Martin broke away from it, bringing down upon themselves the reproaches and ridicule of their *confrères*, but in figure-painting Hunt was the first. He was hardly master enough of his craft to lead the way with absolute authority. He could draw absolutely enough in the Couture manner if he set himself seriously to the task, but in the swift, dashing work that he loved he was not sure enough to do with certainty what he would. When, for instance, he painted a large version of 'The Bathers' he neither corrected the faults nor retained the freshness of the original sketch, and his portraits were generally left unfinished. He worked on them impetuously for a few hours, striking in the broad general masses, and then his interest would died out. He shirked the labor of carrying the sketch to completion; but when his enthusiasm lasted to the end he produced canvases like the 'Chief Justice Shaw,' admirable in character and workmanship,— and much derided in Boston when first shown. His message was that nothing but the essential should be painted, and nothing unless the artist felt an immediate, personal enthusiasm in his work. It is this that gives vitality to his paintings, and he taught it equally in his life.

Hunt was a personage in Boston. His irrepressible energy, his magnetism, his outbursts of praise or blame, his picturesque praise, his catholic taste, so independent and sure that he was an apostle for Japanese art as well as for the Barbizon school, all gave him a power which he exercised nobly. At Newport, in the early days of his return, he greatly influenced LaFarge, and later, when J. Foxcroft Cole and Bicknell and other early students in Paris came back, he bought their pictures and did what he could to make their path easy. At the sight of some of Vedder's pictures he wrote to the artist, whom he did not know at all personally, and organized an exhibition of his work in Boston, which was successful in every way. Special fame has been gained by the class of young ladies that he taught, and his incisive admonitions to them have been garnered in a book. It is not recorded that any of his pupils gained great distinction in art, but one envies them their experiment, their loyalty to their master, their illusions. Hunt made them share his emotions, which

was an education in itself; he could not make them share his work, and even in his own case the emotions were probably finer than the work. He may have thought so himself, for one of his sadder sayings is, "In another country I might have been a painter." Perhaps with more encouraging surroundings his art might have been more complete, but his influence could hardly have been greater for good. He was of his time, and helped to shape it, and as he retorted to some one who spoke to him of Allston, feeling perhaps a sort of parallelism in their lives, "Well, there is one thing they can say of me: that I have seen something of what has been going on around me."

C. H. CAFFIN 'THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN PAINTING'

PERHAPS the fame of a certain picture, 'Romans of the Decadence,' and the extraordinary interest which its appearance at the Salon of 1847 aroused, had something to do with stimulating his imagination in a new direction; at any rate, it was the painter of this picture whom he sought as a teacher. He joined the studio of Couture. The latter, a pupil of Delaroche, had been trained in a "classic" manner of drawing the figure, which may be summed up in Tennyson's description of Maud:

> "Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
> Dead perfection, no more."

But in Couture's case the frigid and sculptor-like character of the so-called "ideal" figure was warmed with a romantic ardor and enriched with color. It was this combination of qualities that had created a sensation; for it seemed to reconcile the conservatism of the older men with the eager throb of younger life. Yet, as a matter of fact, the picture, like its subject, belonged to an older order of things and had no relation to the spirit of the age. The latter, a scientific and mechanical affair, was directed to an exact study of the cause and effect of natural phenomena; in literature, likewise, to a realistic examination of present life. This picture, with its elaborate classic setting, composed of fragments of Roman architecture cemented together by the painter's imagination, with its crowd of voluptuaries, men and women, under the influence of liquor, in shameless abandonment, contained an element of perennial truth. By inference men could draw from it a moral for the present, but it was hidden under a masquerading of the past. Zola, presenting the same moral, clothed in the actual forms of the rich and poor of his own time, thereby made it sting the conscience of the public. That was shocking, for people do not like the naked truth. In this picture there was no such violation of propriety; the truth was, as it were, only nude; nakedness diffused through a prism of make-believe perfection — art, not life.

But there was a contemporary of Couture's whose ideal was art and life — life in art, art vitalized by the expression of life. As yet, however, he was only that "wild man of the woods," Jean François Millet, unheeded. He, too, in his early struggle for bread had painted "ideal nudes"; now his subjects were the peasants of Barbizon, rough-hewn types of men and women, coarsened and twisted out of shape by toil, as far removed as possible from Couture's.

Yet Hunt, and it was a strange fact, became, during the latter part of his sojourn in France, as strongly influenced by Millet as he had been by Couture. Perhaps it may be explained in this way: starting out with the intention of being a sculptor, he had evidently a prior sensitiveness to form; then, as he came to know pictures, the feeling for color was aroused; he found both satisfied in Couture's work. Moreover, he had come out to learn, and the student's first craving is for definite formularies. Couture, well equipped with set methods and maxims, could show his pupils exactly "how to do it," and in his studio Hunt remained for several years, an enthusiastic follower of the master's technique.

But gradually the eagerness of the mere student abated. The influence of Millet, coming later, touched a maturer need. Firstly, it gave him the inspiration of a motive. Millet's uncouth simplicity of truth struck a vein of sincerity in himself. It taught him a notion of the "ideal" very different from the one aimed at and inculcated in Couture's studio — an idealization, not of unnatural perfection, but of human nature as it is; not of high-wrought passion and romance, but of fulfilment of the daily routine of duty. It was a motive at once artistic and moral, based on Truth. And secondly, it was presented with a correspondingly simple sincerity of technique. Millet's strong, broad generalization was as far removed from the exquisite refinement of Couture's method as from the niggling exactness of the Düsseldorfians; its grand sweep of line and dignity of masses were not obviously enforced, but to be discovered under the guise of clumsy forms; it was a method in which nothing is sacrificed to truth of nature, and yet commonplace is always overcome by art.

It was a technique so peculiarly the product of Millet's own conscience that it was not to be learned by any one else; and the principle which it involved, of beginning with nature and ending in art, was so different from Couture's, which was art only, first, last, and all the time, that Hunt never wholly emerged from the conflict of these two influences. He attempted to affect a compromise, but with only partial success, and remained to the end a painter of whom more might have been expected than he actually achieved, since he never gained the assurance of belief in himself which is possessed by many a smaller man.

Returning home, he settled in Newport, Rhode Island, and then moved to Boston, where the remainder of his life was spent. Around him gathered a number of pupils, impressed by the charm of his personality and the dignity of his artistic ideals. This in itself helped to impede his own technical advancement, since it kept him over-occupied with theories and limited his opportunities for the actual practice of painting.

Yet this sacrifice of himself certainly redounded to the benefit of others, for he sowed the seed which has since grown and multiplied. The gist of his teaching was that it is not the subject, but the way in which the subject is rendered, that determines the artistic method of a picture; that in the hands of an artist, any subject, no matter how simple and insignificant, can be made artistic; and that this artistic quality, a product and expression of himself, is

what the painter should aim chiefly to embody in his pictures; furthermore, that the ideal of good brushwork is not to concern one's self with niggling precision of detail for detail's sake, but to obtain truth of character and expression.

A writer in the sixties describes his work as "naïve," which, from our present point of view, it certainly was not. There is nothing in it of the child-spirit; on the contrary, very much of the virile and intellectual. But it displayed what was an unfamiliar quality to his contemporaries,— a capacity for seeing artistic possibilities in the simplest subjects.

Turn to the accompanying reproduction of 'The Bathers' (Plate IX). There is here involved no elevated conception, as in Cole's 'Course of Empire,' nor grandeur of visible appearance, as in Church's 'Cotopaxi,' yet, as a picture, it is vastly superior to either. The reason is that in the making of it the artist's motive was a joy in the possibilities of beautiful expression that the subject offered. First, the poise of the figure, the elastic force of the body and limbs, suspended rather than resting in perfect ease of balance; secondly, the charm of color as the sunlight plays over the nude form, glistening upon the ripples of flesh, illuminating the shadowed parts and kindling all the tones into a healthy, vigorous glow. Everything else in the picture is made contributory to these two possibilities of beautiful expression — poise and sunlit flesh-color — so that, if you had the good fortune to see the original at the last Comparative Exhibition, I think you will agree that it communicated a heightened sense of joy in life.

If this is so, then, you will observe this picture, after all, has an idea involved in its subject that appeals to the imagination. We perhaps reach the heart of the matter when we realize that an idea may be an abstract one, not connected with any definite individual or incident, about which a great deal can be said in words, or which can be described in the form of a story. But the trouble is that so many people are lacking in imagination, or, even if they have imagination, it is not stirred by feeling; it needs to have the idea conveyed to it through a tale of words. I wonder how many people cared about Millet's 'Man with a Hoe' before Mr. Markham versified its appeal, and, on the other hand, how many of those who had appreciated it already found the appreciation increased by verbal exposition?

Hunt's pictures included portraits, figure-subjects, and landscapes, some of the last named containing sheep, which are painted with a truth of character that recalls the work of Jacque. At a time when precision of detail was apt to be considered the highest requisite of a picture, Hunt substituted for it truth of character and expression. Some of his portraits are said to have been indifferent likenesses; but the representation, as it appears in the picture, is invested with distinction and seeming individuality.

HELEN M. KNOWLTON 'ART-LIFE OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT'

WHEN the first French pictures were imported here they aroused a good deal of animosity on the part of those who did not understand their import. There was a fine collection of French masters on exhibition at

the Boston Athenæum in Beacon Street, works by Millet, Rousseau, Troyon, and others. The teacher of art in Harvard University was especially severe upon them, and published a letter in one of the newspapers in which he denounced them without measure. His words naturally aroused Hunt's indignation, and the following letter was the result:

To the Editors of the Boston Daily Advertiser:

The standard of art education is indeed carried to a dizzy height in Harvard University, when such men as Jean François Millet are ranked as triflers. A public exhibition of the *art work* of the gentlemen educated in this advanced school (if the fruit answers the expectations of the tree) would make the university notion of art more clear to the world, and be of service to those of us whose early advantages in art study were necessarily limited by the incapacity of such teachers as Millet and other well-known names of his nationality — a nationality which has always held high rank in art, but which, like the red men, must disappear before the strides of our mighty Western chromo-civilization.

The soil and schools of France within thirty years have shown the world the honored works of Géricault, Delacroix, Ingres, Rousseau, Troyon, Décamps, Meissonier, Regnault, Michel and Gérôme, Corot, Courbet, Couture, Millet and Diaz, Jules Dupré, Baudry, Daubigny, and a hundred others whose earnest work the world never can forget; while those who profess to teach art in our university, with the whisk of the quill undertake to sweep it all into oblivion. The unpardonable conceit of such stuff makes one's blood tingle for shame.

Who of us can volunteer to carry art to France? Which one among the painters named above was not more familiar with Veronese's best work than are our children with the Catechism? They were not only familiar with all that is *evident*, but devoted students of the qualities in Veronese of which few besides them know anything!

It is not worth while to be alarmed about the influence of French art. It would hardly be mortifying if a Millet or a Delacroix should be developed in Boston.

It is not our fault that we inherit ignorance in art; but we are not obliged to advertise it.

WILLIAM M. HUNT.

In 1859 the members of the Essex County Bar resolved to obtain for the Court house, in Salem, a portrait of Chief Justice Shaw. Hunt was living in Newport, Rhode Island, and desired to paint the portrait as an entering-wedge to his profession in Boston. The project was generally opposed by his friends. The especial portrait-painter of the city was Joseph Ames, and it was thought that two men in that branch of the profession would hardly find enough to do. In addition, it was a matter of doubt,—the raising of a sufficient sum of money for the Shaw portrait.

"I want to paint the portrait," said Hunt; "and I don't care about the money."

About one hundred dollars had been obtained by subscription from the members of the Bar; and accepting the commission without reserve, Hunt at once began upon the portrait. It was painted in a small room in the Mercantile Building, corner of Summer and Hawley Streets, the floor-space being so limited that the artist, while painting the lower half of the standing figure, was forced to kneel before the canvas.

The subject was one that would have appealed to Velasquez. Hunt felt this, and brought to the work a full understanding of its possibilities. Judge Shaw was a man who could not have been painted by an ordinary artist. Hunt felt the breadth and weight of his personality, and knew that it must

stand for the highest expression of Law and Justice. He had a strong and decided idea of how the judge was to be represented, and nothing was allowed to weaken the force of that impression. When Mrs. Shaw asked that she might be allowed to see the portrait in the course of its painting, Hunt gently but firmly refused.

"I was painting the judge of the Essex Bar," he afterwards said, "and not for the family. Mrs. Shaw would not have liked it. It would not have looked as she would wish to have it. Had I listened to her my impression of the man as I had seen him would have been changed — perhaps weakened. I was right to be firm about it. I wanted him to look as he did in court while giving his charge to the jury; not as he would appear at home, in his family."

The sum of five hundred dollars was finally paid by the members of the Bar of Essex County. The portrait is invaluable. It hangs in the Court-house at Salem, Massachusetts, and is the Mecca of many an artistic pilgrimage. Rightly it is considered a memorial of a great artist and a great Chief Justice. It is often likened to the portraits of Velasquez, and is remarkable for its wonderful rendering of character and for the extreme breadth and simplicity with which it is painted.

On its completion it was exhibited in the gallery of Messrs. Williams and Everett, and while there excited more derision than any portrait that had ever been shown in Boston. One morning, Mr. Hammatt Billings, a well-known architect and designer, entered the gallery, and found a group of artists with their heads together, wondering if the portrait were not a joke. They stepped aside to observe its effect upon the new-comer.

"Well, Mr. Billings, what do you think of it?" asked one.

"I think," was the reply, "that it is the greatest portrait that was ever painted in this country."

The by-standers felt that they had made a mistake; that here was a work of art which was quite above their comprehension. They walked away, and left Mr. Billings alone with the portrait.

In reply to a somewhat captious art-critic who charged Hunt with holding autocratic sway over Boston, and with cramming the city with French art, of which he and Thomas Couture were the prophets, Hunt said:

"I have never undertaken to teach Couture's method, or that of any other painter. I have endeavored, as all my pupils will say, to develop in each an individual manner. I would as soon think of teaching a method of writing poetry. The words 'French art,' which you put in my mouth, I do not remember to have ever used in my class. They convey no meaning to the art-student further than being a suggestion of a class of skilfully painted pictures, imported into New York, and sold to amateurs and dealers all over the country. The term is used here by what are called 'dealers' assistants,' who drum up purchasers and pocket commissions.

"Among modern pictures I admire the works of Reynolds, Gainsborough, Hogarth, Constable, Turner, Géricault, Delacroix, Ingres, Flandrin, Corot, Millet, and others. I have pointed these out to my pupils as admirable; and

I shall not forget that Géricault, one of the greatest of modern painters,— and, mind you, not a stickler for French art,— went over to England, and wrote to Delacroix to follow him, saying that the English had, at that time, the best painters.

"The idea that fine-art was ever confined to a school, or a people, is too idiotic to speak of. To be accused of upholding such a sentiment is as silly as it would be for me to publish that you believe that the art-criticism can only be written with a quill of the great, bald-headed, American eagle."

A sculptor-friend of Hunt's, who had executed, while in Paris, some fine bronzes, wrote to ask if it would be a good idea to exhibit them in Boston, and wished to know if there would be any probability of their being sold. He received this characteristic answer:

"By all means show your things in Boston. If there are not more than three persons here who will enjoy them, you should send them. These three need to see them. As for selling, that you need not expect. But if you can get up a lecture on the shape of the dishes used by the Greeks in which to mix plaster you will have plenty of chances to deliver it, that subject being, at this moment, of surpassing importance in this city."

Riding in a Washington Street car he saw a woman rise from her seat and frantically pull the bell-rope. Hunt exclaimed, *sotto voce*, and with well-feigned dismay:

"That woman *almost went by Winter Street* " (the Mecca of Boston shoppers).

Hunt was painting one of the first judges in Massachusetts when a son of the sitter called to see the portrait. Observing only the shaded white shirt-front, he exclaimed:

"Is father's shirt as soiled as that? I thought that he wore a white one."

"My God!" thundered forth the painter. "Is n't your father anything but a white shirt?"

Speaking of stupid people, he said:

"I 'd like to be like that tea-kettle, stupid thing. It reflects everything, and feels nothing."

Tom Robinson once said to Hunt:

"In the days of Velasquez, and the other great fellows, there were better-looking men to paint than now."

"No," said Hunt; "if you had photographs of the old fellows they painted you would find that they were no better than the men of this time. It depends upon who looks at them. Could we look with the eyes of a Rembrandt or a Velasquez, we should have no lack of fine subjects."

Speaking of Napoleon Bonaparte, Robinson said that he could not understand his fascination. He had regarded him as a scourge. Hunt replied:

"Napoleon was able to make the Frenchman more of a Frenchman than he had ever been before. He finished him off."

Robinson had painted a fine 'Head of a Bull,' and had sold it for a hundred dollars. A by-stander inquired:

"Why don't you paint a thousand of them?"

"Yes," said Hunt, "and sell them for seventy-five cents apiece."

Hunt had, at one time, an Irishman to take care of his studio, a man who took every opportunity to watch the painter while at work. One morning some of the brushes and paints were missing, and the man confessed that he had carried them home in order to paint portraits of his wife and two children. Hunt asked him to bring the work for him to see, and declared that they were "not so bad." Talking with the man about the chances of his success, he said:

"You may get your living by it and you may not."

"I'm not going to get my living by painting portraits," said the man. "It is too d——d hard work."

President John Quincy Adams once asserted that he "would not give fifty cents for all the works of Phidias and Praxiteles;" adding that he hoped that America would not think of sculpture for two centuries to come. On hearing of this, Hunt dryly inquired:

"Does that sum of money really represent Mr. Adams's estimation of the sculpture of those artists, or the value which he places upon fifty cents?"

The Works of Hunt

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

'PORTRAIT OF MASTER GARDNER' PLATE I

HUNT is said to have looked forward to doing this portrait with very little interest, but when he met the famous head-master of the Boston Latin School he perceived that here indeed was a character and a splendid subject for a picture. The very marked and striking characteristic points of the schoolmaster are brought out with great force and vigor. This is one of Hunt's strong pictures. The flyaway hair and careless cravat are full of character. It is not a posed picture, but simply a tired old schoolmaster, heavily planted in his chair and resting a moment. The figure, as in almost all of Hunt's, is well placed on the canvas.

'PORTRAIT OF MRS. C. F. ADAMS' PLATE II

THIS portrait, handsomely arranged and dignified, is also interesting as showing how completely Hunt could "finish" a subject when he was thoroughly interested and thought the *motif* demanded it. The eyes and

mouth, indeed the whole face, is carried further than are many of his portraits; and the lace, while kept in proper subordination, is delightfully studied in the right places. Again, the hands are full of individual character, and painted with a suavity which does not prevent a high finish. The expression of the face is distinguished and agreeable, while no effort has been made to flatter. This picture sticks in one's memory as one of the finest of Hunt's portraits.

'HEAD OF AN OLD MAN' PLATE III

THIS head of a fast disappearing New England type is packed full of character. The quality of the big nose, the grim mouth, and the firm, hard eyes are excellently well indicated, and the long hair and beard of an elder mode are suggested with a proper understanding of their effect on the character of the whole.

This, in comparison to the 'Mrs. Adams' and the 'Portrait of Miss T.,' indicates the astonishing versatility of Hunt. He could indicate feminine grace with an almost supersensitive delicacy, while in portraits of men, like the one of which we are speaking, of the 'Judge Shaw' and the 'Master Gardner,' he would express the most virile traits in a masterly manner.

'THE DISCOVERER' [STUDY] PLATE IV

THIS, though only a cartoon study, is introduced because 'The Discoverer' was one of the great efforts of Hunt's life and ought to be considered in a review of his work. It is pure allegory, although Hunt was, for the most part, a romantic realist. The figures, though in no sense academic, have a certain charm, and the masses of light and dark are well balanced on the canvas. Both these pictures represent something entirely original in the history of decorations. Most decorations can be studied in relation to the things that came before, but though Hunt knew his old masters as few men did, these pictures betray nothing in composition that suggests any of the older men.

'THE FLIGHT OF NIGHT' PLATE V

THIS study gives a passable idea of the effect of the famous decoration at Albany, now unfortunately ruined. It is to be noted that while almost all modern decoration betrays its origin — this recalling Puvis, that Tiepolo, another Veronese — this picture at least is very personal, recalling no particular master. Hunt by this time knew perfectly well what he wanted to express, and expressed it in a quite individual manner.

The horses, for which he made a magnificent clay study, are full of fine action and are well placed one in relation to another. Hunt was extremely fond of horses and felt that he understood their beauty and character.

'PORTRAIT OF JUDGE SHAW' PLATE VI

THIS has stood for many years as the finest portrait of a man painted in America, and, while technically other portraits by Americans have surpassed it, it still remains a tremendously vital and impressive performance. Hunt has got the impression of the grim old judge, perhaps pronouncing a verdict. There is something monumental about the thing. It would look as well in bronze. Apart from the great power of the thing, there are smaller matters to note. The figure is very well placed on the canvas. Note the skilfully placed *rappel* of white paper under the book, which repeats the clear note of the brief and the white cravat. There is no sense of emptiness; the canvas is well filled, and yet there is not one unnecessary accessory.

'PORTRAIT OF MISS T.' PLATE VII

THIS portrait study, though hardly more than a sketch, is included as showing the distinction and grace of Hunt's manner. While he was able to carry a picture very far, he sometimes — perhaps too often — dreaded to lose the first fine careless rapture of a sketch in those subsequent operations which sometimes destroy all spirit. In this case, one is glad of the result, although it would be interesting to see what he would have made of another canvas of the same subject carried to the limit of his capacity. In this, the primary things, the poise of the head, the character, and the general effect, are very successfully rendered.

'GIRL WITH WHITE CAP' PLATE VIII

ANOTHER instance of Hunt's love for excessively delicate subjects. He was always able to avoid the merely pretty in these things, although one sometimes wishes he had cared to finish them more. Doubtless he felt that in this profile he had attained an impression of exquisite sensitiveness which he did not care to lose. Oddly enough, this picture recalls certain heads of Jean Gigoux, a Romanticist who lived well into the 80's and in his later years painted heads influenced by latter thought, of a curious refinement and delicacy. The *flou*, or softened edges, which are so much the fashion nowadays, were a new thing in Hunt's day, and he was indeed often in his time criticised for making the forms so vague.

'THE BATHERS' PLATE IX

SURELY one of the most original of compositions. There is an inevitableness about it which belongs only to things seen in nature. Hunt, while driving, saw a youth diving from a man's shoulders, and, going home at once, painted this picture almost at a jet. He felt that there were certain slighted bits of drawing, but wishing not to risk the loss of qualities already attained, he preferred to make a larger picture from this. The larger picture, though fine, is said to lack something of the charm of the first. The picture, though hardly in accord with certain modern ideas of *plein air*, is a thoroughly artistic

performance. Note especially the subtle loss of balance, very characteristic of the pose.

'GIRL READING' PLATE X

THIS girl reading suggests as much the influence of Millet as any of Hunt's works do, and yet any resemblance that may exist is purely superficial. This young peasant, if peasant she was, is of a delicate, neurotic type. Everything shivers with nervousness. There is nothing of Millet's fine, somewhat stodgy sculpturesque quality. It is *raffine* with a certain American delicacy which was characteristic of Hunt. The light and shade is handsomely seen, and, though the shadows are painted with something that looks like burnt Sienna, giving an unnecessarily warm tone, the general color-effect is agreeable. This picture is included as characteristic of his early work.

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS BY WILLIAM M. HUNT

HEAD OF A JEWESS; Priscilla; Farmer's Return; Sheep-Shearing at Barbizon; Fortune-Teller; The Bathers (Plate IX); Prodigal Son; Girl with a Kitten; Girl Reading (Plate X); Girl Spinning; Violet Girl; Marguerite; Girl with a White Cap (Plate VIII); Hurdy-Gurdy Boy; Drummer-Boy; Bugle Call; Gloucester Harbor; Newton Lower Falls; Head of an Old Man (Plate III); Coast Scene at Magnolia, Mass.; Dead in the Snow; The Lambs; Portrait of Chief Justice Shaw (Plate VI); Allan Wardner; Portrait of Horace Gray; Portrait of Chief Justice Gray; Portrait of Miss T. (Plate VII); Portrait of Miss S. G. Ward; Portrait of Peter C. Brooks, Jr.; Portrait of his Wife; Portrait of Mrs. C. F. Adams (Plate II); Portrait of Master Gardner (Plate I); Portrait of Hon. W. M. Evarts; Portrait of Miss Mason; The Flight of Night (Plate V); The Discoverer (Plate IV); Mural Decorations in the Capitol at Albany.

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worth a frame is certainly deserving of good light

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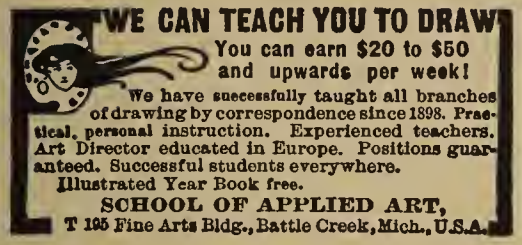
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